



SUNDAY 31 JULY 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

**The Parishes of:** Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

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## ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

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### 18th Sunday of the Year (C) : Luke 12: 13-21

A former neighbour used to change his car and his phone with alarming regularity. He liked to have the latest. The kudos of apparently leading the field never seemed to make him happy, he was usually seeking the next latest whatever.

He was stuck. A victim of his own making, driven by acquiring material things, always comparing himself to others. Sunday was his car washing and polishing day. He treated his car with the care and pride you might have for a young son or daughter. We got on well but he was always out to impress.

Jesus tells us a story today about a man immersed in material gain with seemingly no thought for others. He calls him a fool - a harsh label from a loving God. We mustn't judge. There'll be background reasons why my old neighbour was the way he was and only the Lord knows the full details. But the warning is clear and even brutal. Check your lived-out values dispassionately from time to time to spot where your priorities may be heading.

Living on or below the breadline is too frequent an occurrence in our present world for far too many people. The poor have special regard in God's eyes - not because there's anything good in being poor - there isn't - but God cares where others don't and we're required to do the very same. Our God becomes vulnerable and shares the lot of the poor. "As often as you help or don't help the least of these, you help or don't help me." Jesus says to us (Matthew 25:40). Until we grasp this we're unlikely to appreciate that following Jesus means making gutsy choices about helping others. It never ends.

We rehearse Jesus' job description when we sing 'He sent me to bring the Good News to the Poor'. It's our task too, and unpacking what that means to the poor will involve time and expense. By working together the nations of the world could end world poverty. The political and individual will is not there. Poverty is too often caused by the hell-bent pursuit of material gain by others. Altruism is in short supply. The followers of Jesus make many good things possible but it needs organisation, understanding and commitment. Starting small is wise. Staying small disappointing.

God stares at us in the faces of needy people. They come at inconvenient times, give us guilt feelings sometimes, cause us to face reluctance within us. But their ability to teach us the Gospel never ends. We can't afford being like the fool in today's story. God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:25).



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### Pope Francis on holiness

Those who really wish to give glory to God by their lives, who truly long to grow in holiness, are called to be single-minded and tenacious in their practice of the works of mercy. Saint Teresa of Calcutta clearly realised this, 'Yes, I have many human faults and failures.... But God bends down and uses us, you and me, to be his love and his compassion in the world; he bears our sins, our troubles and our faults. He depends on us to love the world and to show how much he loves it. If we are too concerned with ourselves, we will have no time left for others'.

Hedonism and consumerism can prove our downfall, for when we are obsessed with our own pleasure, we end up being all too concerned about ourselves and our rights, and we feel a desperate need for free time to enjoy ourselves. We will find it hard to feel and show any real concern for those in need, unless we are able to cultivate a certain simplicity of life, resisting the feverish demands of a consumer society, which leave us impoverished and unsatisfied, anxious to have it all now. Similarly, when we allow ourselves to be caught up in superficial information, instant communication and virtual reality, we can waste precious time and become indifferent to the suffering flesh of our brothers and sisters. Yet even amid this whirlwind of activity, the Gospel continues to resound, offering us the promise of a different life, a healthier and happier life.

**- Rejoice and Be Glad paras 107-108**